DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 843 IR 057 473

AUTHOR Williamson, Vicki
TITLE Innovation and Change in Professional Practice: Meaning To Change and Changing the Meaning.
PUB DATE 1999-05-00
NOTE 9p.; In: The Future of Libraries in Human Communication: Abstracts and Fulltext Documents of Papers and Demos Given at the [International Association of Technological University Libraries] IATUL Conference (Chania, Greece, May 17-21, 1999) Volume 19; see IR 057 443.
AVAILABLE FROM Web site: http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/IATUL/proceedcontents/chanpap/williams.html
PUB TYPE Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Libraries; Educational Theories; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Innovation; *Library Development; Library Science; Professional Personnel; Universities
IDENTIFIERS Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on innovation and the change triggered by the introduction of new approaches to planned change in professional practice. It presents a range of ideas and theories about innovation and change and speculates about how new approaches get introduced and become accepted into professional practice. The paper concludes by focusing on the nature and characteristics of change (need, clarity, complexity, adaptability) and some theories that might provide for better understanding and management of change, both within the context of individual libraries and across university libraries generally. While somewhat theoretical, the ideas presented come directly from educational theories that are being applied to case-study research underway in Australian university libraries. (Contains 19 references.) (AEF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Ejallbrant

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/IAT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ml

IATUL

INNOVATION AND CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: MEANING TO CHANGE AND CHANGING THE MEANING

ED 433 843

Williamson Vicki
Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia

E-mail: AVKW@cc.curtin.edu.au

Introduction

The paper is about innovation and the change triggered by the introduction of new approaches to planned change in professional practice. In particular, it presents a range of ideas and theories about innovation and change and speculates about how new approaches get introduced and become accepted into our professional practice. The paper concludes by focusing on the nature and characteristics of change and some theories that might help us to better understand and manage change both within the context of individual libraries and across university libraries generally.

While somewhat theoretical, the ideas presented come directly from education theories that are being applied to case-study research underway in Australia [1]. This research is examining in detail how staff in one Australian university library responded over the period of 1992-1997 to changing times by systematically planning to change their professional practice. In essence, the case study looks at how the staff were meaning to change their professional practice through the innovation of strategic planning and how they used a strategic planning process to drive and change the meaning of their professional practice. In the context of the research, strategic planning is viewed as both educational innovation and driver of change in professional practice and as such strategic planning is both the subject and object of the research.

The specific detail of the LIS case study will be reported later in the final research report and the professional literature. For this Conference presentation, I want to draw on some of the educational theories about innovation and change which underpin the research to help us focus on the conference themes and to better understand and respond to the changing environment in which we operate. A similar approach has been used previously to understand innovation in public libraries in the United States [2].

Changed circumstances for professional practice

As professional practitioners, educators and information managers, working in technological university libraries worldwide, we work in a volatile world and we are constantly reminded that change is something that we had better get used to. Our daily working lives are surrounded by constant reminders that change is upon us.

We are all well acquainted with the fundamental drivers of change and we appreciate that the pace of change is rapid. The underlying economic, technological, political and social factors driving change are well known to us because as people living and working into the 21st century we have personally experienced the impact of many of these changes. I have worked in the libraries of academic institutions for some 20 years. I remember well the dramatic changes brought to our professional practice by the introduction of automated methods of cataloguing. In years ahead I'm sure we will also reflect on the amazing changes brought to our professional practice by the arrival of the Internet.

Global developments in information technology have revolutionised communications worldwide. The

IR057473

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

information age is upon us, the rate and volume of published materials has exploded and the nature and process of scholarly communication and publishing in the electronic age has been fundamentally altered. Governments worldwide have vigorously pursued economic reform agendas for change and demanded of universities worldwide a greater level of efficiency and accountability for the public monies, which they bestow upon us in the form of operating grants. All of the global impacts have affected universities and nowhere more so than in university libraries where many of these factors converge in a quite dramatic way. Frequently local geographic and institutional specific factors and agendas compound them. University libraries are often a microcosm reflecting the diverse range of change forces at work in universities, in education and in the world at large.

Regardless, many of us would not have predicted the overwhelming rate at which change is happening. Few still have had the time or the opportunity to reflect on the processes which drive change and so we are left as practitioners to invent our own reactions and to struggle to lead our staff through what can often be a somewhat threatening time.

Change is a phenomenon in our working lives and it is important for us to comprehend this phenomenon and know best how to manage it within our individual workplaces and across the sector generally. Conferences such as IATUL are an important way for us to share professional practice. But so too is applied research which seeks a deeper understanding and knowledge about the forces at work in shaping and changing our professional practice.

Innovation, change and strategic planning

Innovation has been defined as an object, idea, policy or practice that is perceived to be new and which triggers change [3]. An important feature of innovation is that it is perceived as novel whether it is new, or not. For example, the LIS strategic planning process as it was introduced in 1992 was an innovation in the sense that it was a process and approach to the planning of library services, which the LIS staff perceived as something new. It was novel to them and in adopting a formal strategic planning approach into their professional practice, LIS staff triggered change within their organisation. They were not only responding to a changing environment, they were now actively planning to change their professional practice.

In the organisational context, organisations do not need to create or invent the new idea to be considered innovative. However, the idea does have to represent a significant departure from the organisation's own tradition if it is to be viewed as an innovative organisation. For example, the LIS did not create or invent strategic planning but its introduction into their professional practice represented a significant departure from its previous traditions and approaches to planning library services. In particular, LIS staff has not previously set out to review the environment in which they operated, they did not have a formal mission statement, they had not systematically consulted clients about service development or delivery and they had no obvious quality management framework in place.

A significant distinction between the organisation that changes and the one that innovates is related to the timing involved. For example, the innovative library will be an originator or a very early adopter of a new idea, and therefore would be considered a leader with respect to whatever specific changes occur. For example, at the time the LIS staff moved to adopt strategic planning it was not an accepted part of the general planning and management practices of Curtin University of Technology, nor was it in widespread use in Australian universities. LIS staff were therefore early adopters. At this stage it is interesting to think about your list own list of innovative libraries.

Innovation should not be confused with invention, although the two are clearly related. Innovation and change are inextricably linked and are sometimes used interchangeably. Change brings with it various dimensions including rate (speed), scale (size), degree (thoroughness), continuity (profoundness) and direction. Change is a process, which generally takes place over time. Sometimes the process of going

through the change is as significant as the change itself.

Strategic planning has been defined as a process of continual planning for change, which assesses an organisation's or program's internal and external environment, analyses the implications of relevant trends, and identifies effective strategies for achieving a desired future state [4]. Undertaking this process led the LIS staff to systematically and deliberately plan to change their professional practice. They summarised the change as moving away from being a passive repository of information towards that of being a proactive, dynamic, client-focussed information service. This change represented a move away from information collection (just in case) to provider of access to scholarly information, regardless of location and/or format (just in time).

Strategic planning had its origins in the military world and has been extensively used in the business and commercial world. Strategic planning, as an indexing term in ERIC, was first used in 1993. Nevertheless, the term strategic planning was in use in the education literature well before 1993, having first appeared in the early 1980s.

In relation to strategic planning in the educational setting of university libraries, a prominent early author on this topic was Donald E. Riggs [5]. Riggs, who was in the early 1980s then Director of University Libraries at the Arizona State University (ASU) was one of the first library managers to apply the principles of strategic planning to the professional practice of a large university library. His early writing and his work at ASU provided the foundations for his major writing on the topic [6]. Riggs continues to influence the literature and the professional practice of librarians, especially those working in university libraries. Riggs is also well cited by other authors on the subject of strategic planning in libraries during the latter half of the 1980's and 1990's.

During the second half of the 1980's, the concept of strategic planning in libraries began to emerge in a small number of articles in the literature about Australian libraries. These reports largely centred on a discussion of models of strategic planning and the use of library service surveys to inform the strategic planning process. For example, one of the earliest cases reported was about the use of strategic planning concepts to assist with the development of the library building and services at the new Parliament House complex in Canberra [7]. Other cases reported around this time included the use of strategic planning concepts in an academic library [8] and a medical library [9].

By the later half of the 1990's, the literature has many examples of strategic planning in academic libraries. Indeed, Bundy suggests that Australian university libraries have quickly developed sophisticated approaches to strategic planning and client focused performance and its measurement, often ahead of their parent communities [10]. Many of the examples appearing in literature during this period are grounded in corporate managerialism and the need for change management. At this time also, public relations begins to emerge as a core part of the strategic planning cycle. During the first half of the 1990's the emphasis is on flexibility in strategic planning and the use of technology to assist the process. It also becomes linked to performance, whether this is performance-based reward, or performance measurement and review.

In the library literature during the latter half of the 1990's the term strategic planning becomes mixed with Total Quality Management (TQM) and Total Quality Service (TQS). Particular examples of the application of strategic planning in libraries become common in the literature. There is an increased emphasis on a participatory model of strategic planning and the focus is often on the use of teams and group decision making as a tool in strategic planning.

Finally in relation to strategic planning and libraries, a review of the research available through *Dissertation Abstracts* found the earliest occurrence of a master or doctoral thesis that included the term strategic planning in academic libraries were both in 1986. [11, 12]

The research-in-progress

My research interest in how innovation gets introduced, implemented and institutionalised into our professional practice as librarians and how we can best manage change triggered by innovation comes directly from the situation we had been working through at the LIS.

However, we had been so busy reacting to the very complex and changing environment in which we found ourselves operating that we did not have time to adequately reflect on what was taking place in our professional practice. Therefore, the research-in-progress is designed to do exactly that: to look retrospectively at the staff experiences of innovation and change, through their strategic planning process, over the period from 1992 to 1997.

In 1992 the LIS staff deliberately set out to use the innovation of strategic planning to trigger change in their professional practice and to drive change within their organisation. LIS staff used a strategic planning process to:

- respond to the changing role of the library and redefine their mission
- respond to the changing role of the library and develop new organisational structures and methodologies
- focus on users and become a client-centred library
- give attention to staff development and participation
- ensure quality management principles became integral to the planning and management of service delivery.

My general pondering and research about innovation and change is therefore fundamental to some of the questions presented by the Conference organisers and which we will focus on during our deliberations at this Conferences. These include:

- What is our vision for technological university libraries?
- How does the changing role of libraries influence our professional practice?
- What new processes and practices do we need to put in place in order to achieve our vision for technological university libraries?
- How can we ensure that our professional practice is responsive to client needs?
- As professional practitioners and managers working in the 21st century what are the defining competencies and attitudes required by library staff?
- What processes and systems do we need to put in place to monitor our progress and to effectively respond to changing circumstances?

These Conference focus questions are not dissimilar to the questions being addressed by the LIS case study research. These are:

- What key organisational factors and processes help to ensure successful educational innovation and strategic change in professional practice?
- What are the nature and characteristics of the strategic planning process?
- Within a strategic planning process how critical is the articulation of a shared vision and values for driving the innovation and strategic change?
- What particular processes help to ensure a shared vision and values?
- To what extent does the adoption of a strategic planning process contribute to successful innovation and the achievement of strategic change?

Change theories

The literature on educational change offers us some insights into the nature of change. This literature is vast, especially that covering the implementation of specific curriculum, technological and other forms of classroom and administrative innovation. The literature about change and its management in organisational contexts is also expansive and frequently this literature crosses discipline boundaries. For example, a predominance of recent publications has emerged through the literature of business management, highlighting the experiences of the business and corporate sector. Concepts of economic rationalism and corporate managerialism are gradually finding their way into the educational domain and are emerging as a force behind the structural reform movement in education.

Reviewing educational literature over a 30-year period, identified three influential perspectives in education change [13]: These were:

- The rational-scientific perspective (or the R & D approach) that change is created by the dissemination of innovative techniques.
- The political perspective (or the top-down approach) bringing about change through legislative and other external directives.
- The cultural perspective (or the bottom-up approach) seeking to influence change through encouraging value changes within organisations.

In noting how far the study of educational change has come during its 30-year history, Fullan has suggested that we may be at the beginning of a new phase in how we think and act in relation to change. He describes this new phase as a quantum leap or a paradigm breakthrough. He uses Pascale's observation that productive change roams somewhere between overcontrol and chaos to describe how this new phase of change presents itself [14].

Fullan has much to say about the nature of the change process, but what is important for us as professional practitioners are his eight basic lessons of the new paradigm of change. These are:

Lesson 1: You can't mandate what matters.
The more complex the change the less you can force it.

Lesson 2: Change is a journey not a blueprint.
Change is non-liner, loaded with uncertainty and excitement and sometimes perverse.

Lesson 3: Problems are our friends.
Problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them.

Lesson 4: Vision and strategic planning come later.
Premature visions and planning blind.

Lesson 5: Individualism and collectivism must have equal power.
There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink.

Lesson 6: Neither centralisation nor decentralisation works.
Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary.

Lesson 7: Connection with the wider environment is critical for success.
The best organisations learn externally as well as internally.

Lesson 8: Every person is a change agent.
Change is too important to leave to the experts, personal mind set and mastery is the ultimate

protection.

Some other writers have suggested various types of change. For example, Daft categories change into four types: technological, product or service, administrative or managerial, and human resources and this is a useful typology for libraries. These types of change are of course not necessarily independent of each other and it is the innovation that triggers several different types of changes, which can be the most complex. For example, a new service such as online database searching may require a technology change as well as a change in organisation structure and in staff skills [15].

Change is above all a process and several writers have suggested some common elements or attributes in the process. For example, Fullan focuses on the following attributes [16]:

Need. The extent to which the innovation addresses a priority need as perceived by those who are to implement the change. Some contend that the importance and perceived relevance of the innovation significantly impacts on the change process. Where the innovation focuses on a specific identified need there is likely to be a more enthusiastic and actively engaged change process.

Clarity. The clarity of the innovation refers to the extent to which those implementing the innovation are clear about the essential features of the change and what they are to do differently. Often unspecified changes can cause great anxiety and frustration to those sincerely trying to implement them.

Complexity. Complexity of innovation refers to the extent of change and the degree of effort required in implementing the change. For example an innovation that requires substantial rather than trivial change and perhaps one that involves new organisational arrangements, new mindset and new behaviours is complex.

Adaptability. This is related to the degree of explicitness of the innovation. The less explicit the innovation, the more it is open to translation and modification during the implementation process and leaving innovation unspecified can result in confusion for those trying to effect the change.

Stages of change and the spread of change

Another important dimension of innovation and change is that it moves through various stages ranging from conceptualisation, through implementation, to a stage at which the innovation is accepted and maintained as part of normal way of operating? These stages of adoption, implementation and institutionalisation help to highlight that change is generally accepted a three-phase process [17].

If change moves through stages then how does change spread and get accepted as normal sector-wide professional practice. For example, how does a change in professional practice within one university library spread to become accepted as good professional practice across university libraries generally?

Concept such as Adoption and Diffusion help explain the spread of innovation into professional practice.

While, **Adoption** is the decision to put the new idea into practice, **Diffusion** is defined as the process through which an innovation is incorporated into a social system (such as the broad field of university or academic libraries). While the process of planned organisational change leads to the adoption of an innovation within a single organisation, the diffusion process occurs across the many organisations that are members of the same social system [18].

Communication is central to the diffusion process. The spread of new approaches and their acceptance into professional practice is dependent upon human interaction whereby one person communicates a new idea

to others.

Time is also important to innovation and change. For example, the stages of change take place over time and the spread of innovation also takes time.

Change – the challenge of the future

Fullan has suggested that the real challenge of change for the 1990s is to deal with the more second-order change – changes that effect the culture and structure of organisations, restructuring roles and reorganising responsibilities. In the past we have often worked on the notion that if we just 'fix it' and if we all perform our roles better, we will have improved libraries [19].

The research-in-progress and these conference discussions are concerned with this deeper impact of innovation and change. Changing the culture and attitudes underpinning our professional practice is a much greater challenge than simply dealing with the electronic age and fixing electronic information. Over time we need to develop totally new and truly innovative approaches to our professional practice for the 21st century.

Conclusion

This paper has focussed generally on innovation and change in professional practice. It has presented a range of ideas and theories about innovation and change and speculated somewhat about how new approaches get introduced and become part of our professional practice. By focusing on the nature and characteristics of change and some theories to help unpack the complex nature of change, I hope the Conference themes have come more sharply into focus. I hope we are more excited about the prospect of planning for change in our professional practice. Eventually, I hope too that the research underway in Australia might also give greater clarity about how innovation and change takes place in our professional practice.

References

1. WILLIAMSON, V. K., Doctor of Education thesis proposal. Perth, Unpublished, 1998. 10p.

2. PUNGITORE, V. L., Innovation and the library: The adoption of new ideas in public libraries. (Contributions in librarianship and information science, number 86). Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1995. 189p.

3. SPENCE, W. R., Innovation: The communication of change in ideas, practices and products. London, Chapman and Hall, 1994. 253p.

4. HOUSTON, J. E., Thesaurus of ERIC descriptors. 13th ed. Phoenix, AZ, Oryx Press, 1995.

5. RIGGS, D. E., ed, Library leadership: Visualising the future. Phoenix, AZ, Oryx Press, 1982.

6. RIGGS, D. E., Strategic planning for library managers. Phoenix, AZ, Oryx Press, 1984.

7. BRUDENALL, J., What business are we in? Strategic planning for libraries. In: Proceeding of the Library Association of Australia, Library Technicians Section Conference, Canberra, 27-30 March 1985. Adelaide, Auslib Press, 1985. pp13-29.

8. WAINWRIGHT, E., Library development at the university of Adelaide: a strategic planning framework, 1986 to 1993. Australian Academic and Research Libraries, 18 (2, June), 1987: pp. 65-87.

9. VIRGO, J. C. A., Strategic planning for libraries. Paper presented at the Australian Medical Librarians Conference, Adelaide 1987.

10. BUNDY, A. Investing in the future: Client-focussed Australian academic libraries in the 1990s. Australian Library Journal, 46(4, November), 1997, pp. 354-369.

11. BINGHAM, F. G. J., Applying marketing and strategic planning concepts to higher education. Unpublished PhD, University of Massachusetts, Massachusetts. 1986.

12. NEUMAN, S. G., The influence of management information systems in strategic planning for collection development in academic libraries. Unpublished PhD, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, 1986.

13. SASHKIN, M. and EGERMEIER, J., School change models and processes: a review and synthesis of research and practice (ED250801). Austin, TX, University of Texas at Austin. 1993.

14. FULLAN, M., Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform. London, Falmer Press, 1993.

15. DAFT, R. L., Organisational theory and design. 3rd ed. St Pauls, West Publishing Co, 1989.

16. FULLAN, M., The new meaning of educational change. Second ed. London, Cassell, 1991.

17. FULLAN, M., Change forces: probing the depths of education reform. London, Falmer press, 1993.

18. PUNGITORE, V. L., Innovation and the library: The adoption of new ideas in public libraries. (Contributions in librarianship and information science, number 86). Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1995. 189p.

19. FULLAN, M., The new meaning of educational change. Second ed. London, Cassell, 1991.

Back to contents

Last edited by J.F. 16th June, 1999.